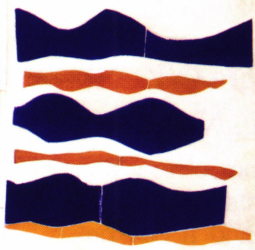


Against the Odds

Use this guide to discover inspiring artists who didn't let adversity stand in the way of creativity.







A:: Gallery 35 **Pierre-Auguste Renoir,**
Washerwoman, modeled 1917 (cast 1919)

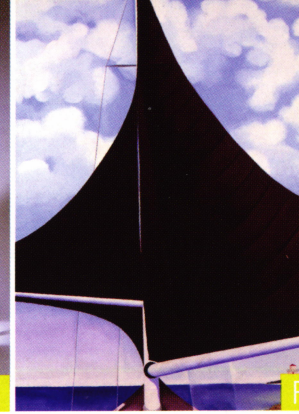
By the time Renoir oversaw the creation of this sculpture, he was confined to a wheelchair, partially paralyzed, with the joints of his hands deformed by rheumatoid arthritis. First struck by the disease about 1892, by 1910 he was severely disabled. However, he painting nearly every day with the brush wedged between his fingers until his arms became paralyzed in 1912. He then turned to sculpture, creating images in his mind and working with a sculptor to translate them into physical form.

B:: Gallery 35 **Vincent van Gogh,**
Houses at Auvers, 1890

Did Van Gogh suffer from epilepsy? Lead poisoning? Porphyria? The famous incident in which he threatened artist Paul Gauguin with a razor, then cut off a piece of his own ear, suggests bipolar disorder to many. Whatever his diagnosis, Van Gogh's letters imply that he found order and even therapy in the act of painting—at least temporarily. In late July 1890 in Auvers, where he painted Toledo's two canvases, Van Gogh fatally shot himself in the chest.

C:: Gallery 33 **Edgar Degas,**
Rearing Horse, 1880s

From 1870, Degas had lost most of the vision in his right eye and had a blind spot in the left, probably due to retinal disease. The condition worsened until he was essentially blind. He continued to work around his deteriorating vision, however, drawing with pastels and modeling in wax—both of which allowed him a freer expression than oil paint. His wax sculptures were discovered in his studio after his death and cast in bronze.



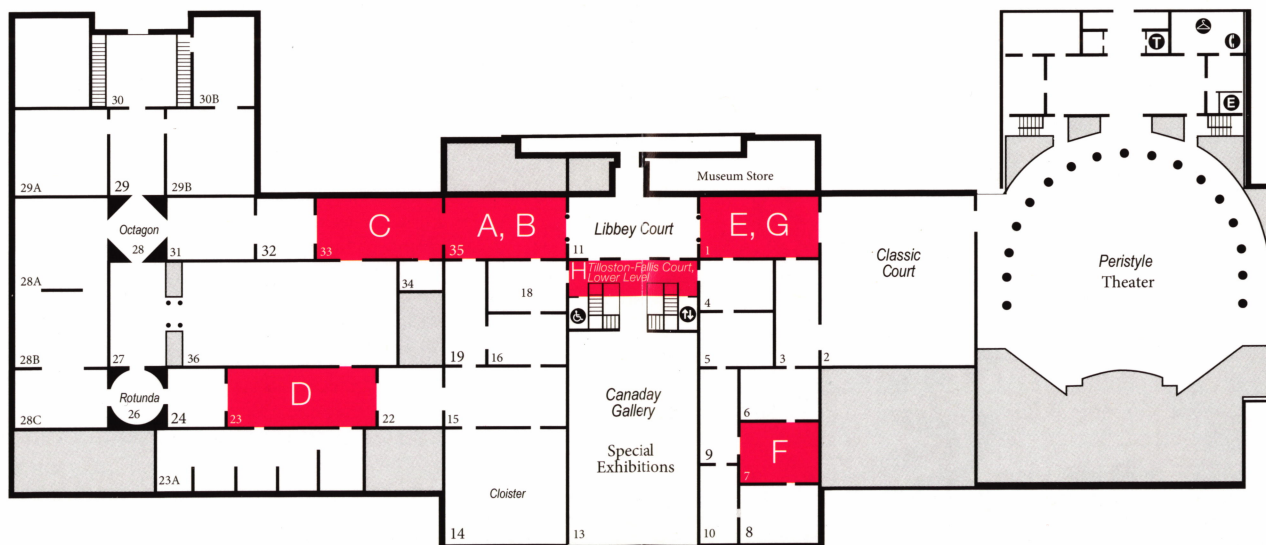
Known as the “Mute of Kampen,” the town where he lived and worked most of his life, Avercamp grew up deaf during a time when the condition was little understood or accommodated. He nonetheless pioneered the popular Dutch genre of winter scenes, becoming a successful artist despite the obstacles that 17th-century society placed in his path.

Hanson cast his human subjects in plaster, then made startlingly lifelike polyester resin and fiberglass sculptures from the plaster models. Tragically, Hanson's art directly led to his death: he developed non-Hodgkin Lymphoma from

exposure to the toxic resin and fixative fumes. Diagnosed in 1971 at the height of his career (and the year he made *Executive*), Hanson battled the recurring cancer for 25 years, continuing to create his sculptures, until a relapse took his life in 1996.

O’Keeffe suffered from clinical depression most of her life, experiencing a devastating breakdown in 1933. She stopped working for a year and a half before she determined that making art was the best cure for her “unhappiness.” *Brown Sail, Wing and Wing, Nassau* was painted on a trip to the Bahamas following another attack of depression that had left her bedridden for several weeks.

CONTINUED ON BACK





G:: Gallery 1 *Chuck Close, Alex, 1987*

In December 1988, not long after completing *Alex*, Close experienced what he calls “The Event”: a sudden collapse of his spinal artery, which caused paralysis from the shoulders down. It was assumed that he would never paint again, but Close defiantly painted with the brush held in his teeth. With physical therapy he was eventually able to regain some motor skills and now paints his monumental portraits on gridded canvases prepared for him by his assistants, the brushes strapped to his wrists.

H:: Tilloston-Fallis Court, Lower Level *Henri Matisse, Apollo, 1953*

Recovering from an operation for duodenal cancer in 1941, Matisse found it too difficult to paint, even though he felt the urge to create. So he returned to a method of laying out designs that he had used for a mural a decade earlier: cutting shapes from colored paper. He used his paper cut-out technique over the rest of his life to design collages, prints, stained glass windows, and ceramic murals like *Apollo*. Feeling artistically reinvigorated, Matisse declared, “Only what I created after the illness constitutes my real self: free, liberated.”

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